

# Ceritas

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Dear Friends,

The last time we added a vineyard holding was in 2014 with the Trout Gulch Vineyard. We are equally as excited to announce the newest addition of an iconic site from the West Sonoma Coast. Without further ado, we present Occidental Vineyard.

## **OCCIDENTAL VINEYARD**

Fifteen years ago when we started the winery, we felt that the best opportunity for us to express Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in its truest form was going to be from sites located along the northern California coastline 3-8 miles inland. It is here that we witness the Pacific Ocean's consistent moderating factor coupled with the richly diverse soils from the Pacific and American plates colliding.

One place in particular always spoke to us louder than the others – Occidental hills.

One of the sites we longed for holding was the Occidental Vineyard on Taylor Lane. Steve Kistler planted this site (in partnership with the Dutton family) in 1990 using heritage selection massale Pinot Noir material. For many years, this site supplied grapes for his coveted Cuvee Catherine. The Dutton's decided to sell the property in 2009 to Evening Land. On either side of the vineyard lies Theriot Vineyard (Littorai) and across the street is Summa (Rivers-Marie and William Seylem) and down the road is Que Syrah (Arnot-Roberts).

Ceritas signed a long-term lease in 2016 allowing us to work the site as we would like. The site is perfectly situated. South facing. Heritage selection massale clonal material. Blue schist soils with moderate clay content. Well drained due to underlying bedrock. Dry farmed. We could not be more excited about working with this site.

What resulted in 2016 was extraordinary. Our inaugural release is one of the best Pinot Noir's we have bottled to date.

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## **2016 OCCIDENTAL VINEYARD PINOT NOIR**

Early exotic character offers up pungent high-pitched perfume of cranberry, pomegranate, red licorice, rose petal and spicy oak. Large scaled, tactile and powerful with tight grained tannins. Wonderfully silky and thick with inner mouth lift. Very long, slowly mounting finish is vibrant and pure.

This wine is drinking beautifully now but is going to be stunning in years to come.

## **2016 TROUT GULCH VINEYARD CHARDONNAY**

Perfumed lift with aromas of lemon zest, grapefruit and white flowers. Tactile and moderately dense combining powerful salinity and superb depth. Impressive energetic, slowly mounting, palate-staining finish. This wine has flavor and texture of liquid stone and speaks to site so clearly.

Trout Gulch Vineyard is located near the town of Aptos just south of Santa Cruz. Our friend and fellow winemaker, Richard Alfaro, farms the site for us. Growing conditions here are marginal at best. The vineyard is tucked up into a canyon which drains the neighboring watershed. The proximity to the ocean allows the vineyard to be bathed in cool sunshine. This is ideal for growing Chardonnay that has energy and snap.

Planted to Old Wente clone nearly 40 years ago. Organically farmed.

## **2016 PETER MARTIN RAY VINEYARD CHARDONNAY**

Bursts from the glass with an exotic mélange of intensely perfumed yellow stone fruits, citrus peel and spice. Marvelous inner sweetness and layers of expressive fruit seem to blossom in waves as it opens.

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Broad shouldered and exceptionally balanced extending all the way to the viscous finish of thick salinity and candied chamomile.

Nestled high in the hills at 1,800 feet, above the town of Saratoga, lays Peter Martin Ray vineyard, our highest site. One of two sites that we farm in the Santa Cruz mountains, this vineyard is steeped in history dating back to 1943, when stockbroker-turned-winemaker Martin Ray planted the original Chardonnay vines.

When Martin Ray's son, Peter Martin Ray, took over the farming of this site, he replanted to the Mt. Eden clone of Chardonnay in the early 1980s. What makes this fruit so remarkable is a direct result of the vines' constant struggle: raw farmed with minimal manmade input; the vines are constantly seeking water, nutrients and sustenance from deep in the hillside. Characterized by small berries on tiny clusters, this fruit yields wine that is distinctive for its salty, mineral palate, persistent flavors and lingering finish.

## **2016 HACIENDA SECOYA VINEYARD PINOT NOIR**

Pure, complex but restrained nose offers blackberry, black cherry, licorice, spices and white pepper. Wonderfully intense and vibrant, with chewy texture and great fullness and breadth. Noble tannins, savory minerality and lightness of being, this is the essence of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir.

We were first introduced to this vineyard in the Deep End of Anderson Valley a decade ago while working with another winery. The Deep End of Anderson Valley is renowned as an optimal growing area for cool-climate Pinot Noir, due to cool ocean air penetrating through the valley.

Named for the surrounding redwood forest, this southwest facing vineyard sits on an elevated bench just above the valley floor, a stone's throw from the town of Navarro. The vines were planted in 1995 to the Pommard clone in soils that are volcanic in origin and sandstone-based, with a red hue revealing the greater than average iron content. Between the influence of coastal fog and the high proportion of clay in the soil, the vines stay hydrated throughout the growing season.

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## 2016 VINTAGE SUMMARY

Overall, the winter of 2015-2016 was mild. Moderate rainfall fell intermittently starting in November 2015 until the first days of March 2016. Early spring was dry and sunny throughout. With this favorable weather, bud break began around March 25, and we started to wonder if 2016 would be another early year.

The beginning of April was equally dry, and by mid-April, four to five leaves were showing. Temperatures remained above average for most of April but by the time we transitioned into May things started to get cold prompting us to think about alternatives to accelerate flowering or to protect the clusters from shattering (flowers not forming berries). Vine growth slowed and we started to see signs of chlorosis on the coast with the hardest hit areas in Occidental and southern Santa Cruz Mountains. The first flowers were observed on May 21, and full flowering arriving 9-12 days later depending on the site.

For most of June and July we saw higher than average temperatures keeping the coastal fog out of the vineyards more hours of the day than usual allowing the vineyards to get back into a good rhythm, surpassing normal vegetative stages. Things were looking like an early vintage more and more each day.

The beginning of August was cooler than the later part of July allowing us to complete our crop adjustments and permitted the fruit to evenly ripen more so than in years past. Average fruit set was observed throughout most of our sites with particularly good crop loads in Hacienda Secoya Pinot Noir and Peter Martin Ray Chardonnay. Yields overall were average with 1.25-1.63 tons per acre depending on the site.

We began harvest on August 14th and concluded on September 19th.

This will be your only opportunity to purchase the wines. We are thankful for your continued support of our family winery. Be well.

John and Phoebe Raytek